

Public Awareness of Avian Flu Has Increased, but Relatively Few U.S. Adults Have Prepared for a Potential Pandemic

A new Wall Street Journal Online/Harris Interactive Health-Care Poll suggests that while public health officials and policymakers across the globe have been raising the alarm about avian flu and the need to be prepared for what might become a global human pandemic, many U.S. adults are not heeding these warnings. More U.S. adults are familiar with avian flu today than a year ago; and concern about a potential pandemic has also increased. However, relatively few U.S. adults have taken any steps to prepare should such an outbreak occur.

These are some of the results of a Harris Interactive online survey of 2,029 U.S. adults conducted between April 25 and 27, 2006 for The Wall Street Journal Online's Health Industry Edition. This survey was conducted prior to the unveiling of the Bush Administration's updated avian flu preparation plan.

Familiarity and concern with avian flu

About two-thirds (65%) of adults say they are somewhat or very familiar with avian flu, up from 47 percent a year ago. Concern over the pandemic has also increased in the past year as almost two-thirds (63%) of all adults (and 68% of those familiar with avian flu) say they are somewhat or very concerned that the United States might be part of an avian flu pandemic in the near future, up from 51 percent last year.

Preparing for a pandemic

Despite increases in both familiarity and concern over avian flu, the importance adults place on various preparation steps has not changed a great deal in the past year. Majorities say, based on what they know or have heard, that it will be very important or absolutely essential to do the following in order to prepare for a flu pandemic:

- Develop plans to quickly provide critical medical supplies to areas of the globe that experience outbreaks of avian flu (73% now vs. 71% in 2005)
- Develop plans to limit the spread of avian flu via quarantines, travel restrictions, etc. (68% now vs. 65% in 2005)

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- Invest government dollars in the development and production of avian flu vaccines (65% now vs. 61% in 2005)
- Stockpile antiviral drugs that might slow an outbreak of avian flu (66% now vs. 62% in 2005)
- Stockpile critical medical supplies (like surgical masks and gloves) that can help slow the spread of avian flu (59% now vs. 55% in 2005)
- Have food companies screen their flocks of chicken and other poultry for the presence of avian flu (81%)

A majority (52%) of adults think the United States is not very or not at all prepared to deal with an avian flu pandemic, and the survey shows that only one-third (32%) of all adults or their immediate family have personally taken steps in anticipation of a potential pandemic. Almost one in five have looked for information about avian flu (18%) or talked about the potential for an avian flu pandemic (18%). Fewer adults have:

- Stockpiled food, water and basic first aid for use in the event of an outbreak, as suggested by Mike Leavitt, Secretary of Health and Human Services (7%)
- Adjusted their travel plans to stay away from countries that have seen outbreaks of avian flu among birds (6%)
- Prepared a plan for how their family might be ready if an avian flu pandemic happens (5%)
- Set plans to work from home if there is a pandemic flu outbreak (3%).
 Changed their eating habits to stay away from chicken and other poultry (3%)

TABLE 1
Familiar with Avian Flu
 “Based on what you know or have heard, how familiar are you with avian flu?”
 Base: All Adults

	2005	2006
	%	%
Very/Somewhat Familiar (Net)	47	65
Very familiar	8	12
Somewhat familiar	39	53
Not Very/Not at All Familiar (Net)	53	35
Not very familiar	28	18
Not at all familiar	25	16

Note: Percentages may not add up to exactly 100% due to rounding.

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TABLE 2
Concerns About Avian Flu Pandemic

"A pandemic is an epidemic that strikes several continents simultaneously and infects a substantial portion of the population. How concerned are you that the United States might be part of an avian flu pandemic in the near future?"

Base: All Adults

	2005		2006	
	All Adults	Adults Familiar with Avian Flu	All Adults	Adults Familiar with Avian Flu
	%	%	%	%
Very/Somewhat Concerned (Net)	51	60	63	68
Very concerned	12	15	20	20
Somewhat concerned	39	45	44	48
Not Very/At All Concerned (Net)	41	37	31	30
Not very concerned	33	31	24	24
Not at all concerned	8	6	7	6
Don't know enough to have an opinion	9	2	6	2

Note: Percentages may not add up to exactly 100% due to rounding.

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TABLE 3A

Importance of Steps to Prepare for a Flu Pandemic

“Many steps can be taken to prepare for a flu pandemic. Based on what you know or have heard, how important will it be to do each of the following?”

Base: All Adults

			Absolutely Essential/ Very Important (Net)	Absolutely Essential	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Very/At All Important (Net)	Not Very	Not at All Important
Develop plans to quickly provide critical medical supplies to areas of the globe that experience outbreaks of avian flu	2005	%	71	28	43	22	7	4	3
	2006	%	73	34	40	21	6	4	2
Develop plans to limit the spread of avian flu via quarantines, travel restrictions, etc.	2005	%	65	25	40	27	8	6	2
	2006	%	68	30	38	25	7	4	2
Invest government dollars in the development and production of avian flu vaccines	2005	%	61	24	37	31	8	5	3
	2006	%	65	30	35	28	7	4	3
Stockpile antiviral drugs that might slow an outbreak of avian flu	2005	%	62	24	37	29	9	7	3
	2006	%	66	29	37	28	7	5	2
Stockpile critical medical supplies (like surgical masks and gloves) that can help slow the spread of avian flu	2005	%	55	20	35	32	13	10	3
	2006	%	59	25	34	31	9	7	2
Have food companies screen their flocks of chicken and other poultry for the presence of avian flu	2006	%	81	48	33	14	5	2	2

Note: Percentages may not add up to exactly 100% due to rounding.

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TABLE 3B

Importance of Steps to Prepare for a Flu Pandemic

"Many steps can be taken to prepare for a flu pandemic. Based on what you know or have heard, how important will it be to do each of the following?"

Percent Saying "Absolutely Essential/Very Important"

Base: All Adults

	2005		2006	
	Total	Adults Familiar with Avian Flu	Total	Adults Familiar with Avian Flu
	%	%	%	%
Develop plans to quickly provide critical medical supplies to areas of the globe that experience outbreaks of avian flu	71	77	73	76
Develop plans to limit the spread of avian flu via quarantines, travel restrictions, etc.	65	71	68	70
Invest government dollars in the development and production of avian flu vaccines	61	64	65	69
Stockpile antiviral drugs that might slow an outbreak of avian flu	62	64	66	67
Stockpile critical medical supplies (like surgical masks and gloves) that can help slow the spread of avian flu	55	57	59	61
Have food companies screen their flocks of chicken and other poultry for the presence of avian flu	N/A	N/A	81	83

Note: Percentages may not add up to exactly 100% due to rounding.

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TABLE 4

Personal Preparedness for Flu Pandemic

“Have you or your immediate family done any of the following things in anticipation of a potential avian flu pandemic? Choose all that apply.”

Base: All Adults

	Total	Familiar with Avian Flu
	%	%
Looked for information about avian flu	18	25
Talked about the potential of an avian flu pandemic	18	24
Stockpiled food, water and basic first aid for use in the event of an outbreak, as suggested by Mike Leavitt, Secretary of Health and Human Services	7	10
Adjusted your travel plans to stay away from countries that have seen outbreaks of avian flu among birds	6	7
Prepared a plan for how your family might be ready if an avian flu pandemic happens	5	6
Set plans to work from home if there is a pandemic flu outbreak	3	4
Changed your eating habits to stay away from chicken and other poultry	3	3
None of these	68	59

TABLE 5

Preparedness for Flu Pandemic

“Overall, how prepared do you think we are to deal with an avian flu pandemic, should it occur?”

Base: All Adults

	2005		2006	
	All Adults	Adults Familiar with Avian Flu	All Adults	Adults Familiar with Avian Flu
	%	%	%	%
Very/Somewhat Prepared (Net)	40	44	36	41
Very prepared	4	5	3	4
Somewhat prepared	36	39	32	37
Not Very/At All Prepared (Net)	44	51	52	53
Not very prepared	35	41	35	38
Not at all prepared	9	10	17	14
Don't know enough to have an opinion	16	5	13	6

Note: Percentages may not add up to exactly 100% due to rounding.

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Downloadable PDFs of Wall Street Journal Online/Harris Interactive Health-Care Polls are posted at http://www.harrisinteractive.com/news/newsletters_wsj.asp.

Methodology

Harris Interactive conducted this online survey within the United States between April 25 and 27, 2006 among a national cross section of 2,029 adults, ages 18 years and over. Figures for age, gender, race/ethnicity, education, income and region were weighted where necessary to align with population proportions. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents' propensity to be online.

All surveys are subject to several sources of error. These include: sampling error (because only a sample of a population is interviewed); measurement error due to question wording and/or question order, deliberately or unintentionally inaccurate responses, nonresponse (including refusals), interviewer effects (when live interviewers are used) and weighting.

With one exception (sampling error) the magnitude of the errors that result cannot be estimated. There is, therefore, no way to calculate a finite "margin of error" for any survey and the use of these words should be avoided.

With pure probability samples, with 100 percent response rates, it is possible to calculate the probability that the sampling error (but not other sources of error) is not greater than some number. With pure probability samples of 2,029 adults, one could say with a 95 percent probability that the results have a sampling error of +/- 3 percentage points. However that does not take other sources of error into account. This online survey is not based on a probability sample and therefore no theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

These statements conform to the principles of disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.

About the Survey

The Wall Street Journal Online/Harris Interactive Health-Care Poll is an exclusive poll that is published in the award-winning Health Industry Edition of The Wall Street Journal Online at www.wsj.com/health.

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In 2005, the Online Journal was awarded a Codie Award for Best Online News Service for the second consecutive year, and its Health Industry Edition was awarded Best Online Science or Technology Service for the third consecutive year. In 2004, the Online Journal received an Eppy Award for Best Internet Business Service over 1 million monthly visitors.

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About Harris Interactive

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